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REPORT OF

CITY PLAN COMMISSION
OF ST. LOUIS

1912

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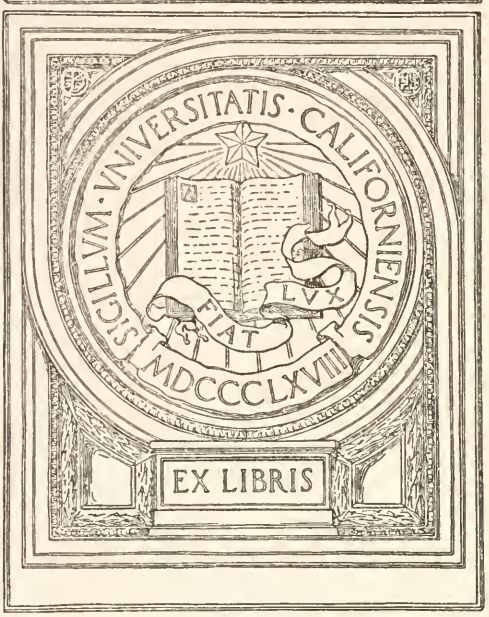

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ST. LOUIS

CENTRAL TRAFFIC-PARKWAY

RECOMMENDED

BY

The City Plan Commission

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JULY, 1912

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CITY PLAN COMMISSION

OF ST. LOUIS

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JOHN H. SOMMERICH,
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Street Commissioner

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Park Commissioner

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WALTER B. STEVENS,
Secretary

MAY

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1912

25745

AN ORDINANCE CREATING A CITY PLAN COMMISSION, DEFINING THE DUTIES THEREOF

Be it ordained by the Municipal Assembly of the City of St. Louis, as follows:

Section One. There is hereby created a Commission to be known as the City Plan Commission which shall consist of fifteen members.

Section Two. The President of the City Council ex-officio, the Speaker of the House of Delegates ex-officio, the President of the Board of Public Improvements ex-officio, the Street Commissioner ex-officio, the Park Commissioner ex-officio, and the Commissioner of Public Buildings ex-officio shall be members of said Commission. The other nine members shall be appointed by the Mayor and all members of said Commission shall serve without compensation. Five of said nine members to be appointed by the Mayor shall be appointed for four years and the remaining four members shall be appointed for two years. All of said members so appointed shall hold their respective office until their successors shall be duly appointed and qualified.

Section Three. The qualifications of the members so to be appointed by the Mayor shall be as provided in Section Ten of Article Four of the Charter of the City of St. Louis.

Section Four. The duties of the City Plan Commission shall be:

First. To prepare a comprehensive city plan for the future improvement, as well as for the commercial development of the city, including recommendations for:

(a) Improvement of the river front;

(b) Extension of streets and the supervision of the opening of sub-divisions;

219314

(c) Improvement of surroundings of Union Station;

(d) A system of widening and opening various through streets so as to make the city more cohesive and less disjointed;

(e) Control of nuisances;

(f) A playground, park and boulevard system;

(g) Location of public buildings;

(h) Encouraging the location of manufacturing establishments in designated districts;

(i) Extension of conduit district for wires;

(j) Extension of granitoid sidewalk districts, and for the regulation of same in the residence districts so as to provide for the planting of trees and for sufficient soil space to assure their growth;

(k) Such other improvements as will tend to make St. Louis a greater and more beautiful city.

Second. To suggest the state and municipal legislation necessary to carry out the recommendations of the Commission.

Section Five. The Commission shall make all rules for its guidance and procedure.

Section Six. The Commission shall submit a report to the Municipal Assembly as comprehensive as may be, on or before January first, nineteen hundred and twelve, and shall make such other reports as the Commission may deem advisable.

Approved March 27, 1911.

CENTRAL TRAFFIC-PARKWAY

REPORT OF THE CITY PLAN COMMISSION, JULY 9, 1912.

To the Honorable Municipal Assembly of the City of St. Louis—
Gentlemen:

Under the provisions of ordinance 25745, approved March 27, 1911, the City Plan Commission submits the following report:

The Commission unanimously recommends that the city acquire by condemnation the property embraced in the city blocks bounded by Market and Chestnut streets, Twelfth street and Jefferson avenue, to create a central traffic-parkway. The Commission recommends this as the essential first step to be taken under Section Four of the Ordinance, which provides that—

"The duties of the City Plan Commission shall be:

"First. To prepare a comprehensive city plan for the future improvement as well as for the commercial development of the city, including recommendations for:

"(c) Improvement of surroundings of Union Station.

"(d) A system of widening and opening various through streets, so as to make the city more cohesive and less disjointed.

"(f) A playground, park and boulevard system."

The Initial Step.

This traffic-parkway from Twelfth street to Jefferson avenue is the initial step in the planning for a greater and better St. Louis. If approved, it will be followed naturally by extension westward from Jefferson avenue to Grand avenue. The best city planning is that which permits traffic to pass from any point to any other point in a city by the most direct and expeditious routes. Judged by such definition St. Louis to-day is not well planned. The traffic-parkway from Twelfth street to Grand avenue will become a main artery of travel east and west. It will be supplemented by connecting radial thoroughfares which will make the city cohesive. There will follow prop-

erly the creation of a traffic-parkway from the vicinity of Twelfth street and Washington avenue northwesterly, touching small parks and playgrounds, including St. Louis Place, and making connection with Natural Bridge Road and Florissant avenue. This will bring North St. Louis into direct and close relationship with the business center. From Twelfth street and Clark avenue will extend southwesterly to the suburbs a traffic-parkway corresponding with that of the northwest, reaching the parks and playgrounds of the southern half of the city and tying that section by direct means of communication to the business center.

Depreciating Values.

In the vicinity of Olive and Twelfth streets values range from $1,000 a front foot upwards. About the intersection of Grand avenue and Olive street values have climbed to similar figures. Between these two centers of high-priced and rising property lies a strip two miles long and half a mile wide. Three-fourths of the property embraced in that strip is not worth as much as it was twenty years ago. A considerable portion would not sell to-day for the prices realized thirty years ago. And some of it has dropped below the value of forty years ago. The depreciation in many blocks has carried this property downward to one-third and one-half of what it was considered worth by a former generation. Rentals have been reduced to fractions of what the improved property once yielded. Four-fifths of the buildings have been allowed to deteriorate. Hundreds of these buildings are now untenanted. A thousand of them yield the owners only nominal revenue.

A Blighted District.

And yet this strip is the geographical center of St. Louis. Its gently undulating topography is ideal for the best city growth. This "blighted district" fronts upon the main gateway into the city. Lengthwise through it run the chief lines of travel between the business center and the residence sections.

Except in a few scattered localities the conditions, bad as they are, are growing worse. The general tendency of values is downward. More than one-half of the frontage is for sale. There is practically no market for ground west of Jefferson avenue, east of Theresa avenue and south of Locust street. The occasional transactions that are taking place east of Jefferson avenue are at prices so low as to tempt speculative buyers willing to wait an indefinite period.

The few improvements between Olive and Market streets consist

chiefly of light manufacturing plants attracted there by the cheapness of the ground. Possibly in the course of the next two generations this blighted district, if nothing is done to redeem it, may be occupied by three-story and four-story factories. That seems to be forecasted by the transition now in its early stages. Such an evolution would fix the undesirable character of the strip for the next half century and perhaps permanently. It would hold down values in the entire district. It would have a damaging influence on the city's growth.

Grand and Olive.

To-day the commercial and financial heart of St. Louis is between Fourth and Twelfth streets, Washington avenue and Market streets. Five years ago the intersection of Broadway and Washington avenue was the center of greatest sidewalk traffic. To-day, in the course of every twenty-four hours, more people pass the crossing of Grand avenue and Olive street than any other intersection of St. Louis thoroughfares. Grand avenue is fifteen minutes from North St. Louis, from South St. Louis, from West St. Louis, from anywhere. The daily papers, within a month, have called attention to the fact that improvements being made and planned in the vicinity of this rising center amount to over $6,000,000.

No gift of prophecy is necessary to predict what may happen if the central section of the city from Twelfth street to Grand avenue is allowed to remain in the present undesirable state until occupied gradually by manufacturing industries encouraged by the present cheapness of the ground. From Twelfth street to Grand avenue the district between Washington avenue and Market street should be prepared for the future commercial expansion. In obedience to the city's natural growth stores, wholesale and retail, hotels, downtown apartment houses, places of amusement, should occupy the territory westward along Washington avenue, Locust, Olive, Pine, Chestnut and Market streets. These frontages should advance rapidly by the legitimate expansion of business and without depreciation of any other section.

Shifting Values.

St. Louis has suffered severely from the shifting of values. The city has seen the leading commercial thoroughfares of one generation become the depreciated and half-deserted avenues of another. The palatial homes of one generation have become the rooming houses of

the next. St. Louis has ruins east of Fourth street and this long blighted district west of Twelfth street. City planning should aim to steady and make permanent the values of the business district. It should provide for logical commercial growth which will not be at the expense and loss of any other section. It should create great thoroughfares which will take care of future traffic without that congestion already apparent on downtown streets.

Looking to such desirable development, the City Plan Commission recommends the acquisition of the blocks between Market and Chestnut streets westward from Twelfth street to Jefferson avenue, for the creation of the central traffic-parkway. Present low values of realty encourage immediate action.

Conditions Which Favor.

The frontage on Twelfth street, between Market and Chestnut streets, is assessed at $1,000 per front foot for the corner of Twelfth and Chestnut, and $1,100 per front foot for the corner at Twelfth and Market. The frontage on Twelfth street between the two corners is assessed at $650 per front foot.

In the western part of the block, extending to Thirteenth street, the frontage on Chestnut street is assessed at $225 and on Market street at $400. These assessments hold for the two frontages except the corners at Thirteenth street, which are assessed at $350 for the Chestnut street corner and $500 for the Market street corner.

On Grand avenue, the western terminus of the proposed traffic-parkway, the ground between Lawton and Pine streets is assessed at $350 on Pine for the Grand avenue corner and at $150 on Lawton for the Grand avenue corner. From both ends of the traffic-parkway valuations diminish rapidly. East of Jefferson avenue the ground is assessed as low as $55 per front foot for Chestnut street frontage, and as low as $65 per front foot for Market street frontage. West of Jefferson avenue a considerable part of the frontage of Pine street is assessed as low as $35 per front foot, while the assessment of the ground fronting on Lawton avenue between Jefferson and Grand for several blocks runs as low as $30 per front foot.

Cheap Improvements.

The valuations of improvements in the blocks within the limits of the proposed traffic-parkway show the same tendency downward. Between Twelfth street and Jefferson avenue, Market and Chestnut streets, there is only one block on which the improvements are rated

CHESTNUT STREET, FRONTING TRAFFIC-PARKWAY

CHESTNUT STREET, PROPERTY TO BE CONDEMNED

by the assessor at over $100,000. That is the block between Eighteenth and Nineteenth, Market and Chestnut streets, opposite Union Station. The principal structures are hotels. The total valuation of the improvements of the entire block is $116,800. The improvements of the block between Sixteenth and Seventeenth, Market and Chestnut, are valued at only $41,800. The valuations of improvements on the other blocks range between $45,000 and $100,000.

The total valuation of all of the improvements in the twelve blocks from Twelfth street to Jefferson avenue, comprehended in the recommended plan for the traffic-parkway, is $840,950, an average of only $70,000 to the block.

In the nine blocks forming what may become the western section of the proposed traffic-parkway, between Lawton avenue and Pine street, extending from Jefferson avenue to Grand avenue, the improvements range from $49,500 to $128,600. The former valuation is for the improvements of the block between Leffingwell and Ewing, while the latter valuation covers the block between Ewing and Garrison. The total assessed valuation for all improvements on the nine blocks is $815,100.

For the entire twenty-one blocks between Twelfth street and Grand avenue the valuation of the improvements is placed by the assessor at only $1,656,050.

Traffic-Parkway Plans.

Five tentative plans before the Commission illustrate the possible development of this traffic-parkway. The blocks between Market and Chestnut streets are narrow from north to south as compared with other St. Louis city blocks. Lots fronting on these streets are only 81 feet deep in the block from Twelfth to Thirteenth street. West of Thirteenth street the lots are from 72 feet to 73 feet 5 inches in depth. This shallow condition prevails to Jefferson avenue.

The condemnation of the blocks would give the city for the proposed traffic-parkway a space of 287 feet width from the north side of Chestnut street to the south side of Market street. The tentative plans contemplate a division of this space into sidewalks, two traffic-ways, two spaces for street car tracks, two narrow parks and a central boulevard.

The tentative plans differ chiefly in the proposed width of the sub-divisions. One of the plans gives the sidewalks along the property line of Chestnut and Market streets a width of ten feet. Next to the sidewalk is allowed a space of ten feet for grass and trees. The

trafficways are 45 feet in width, this space including the two reservations for the car tracks, which are located along the south side of the Chestnut street trafficway and along the north side of the Market street trafficway. Next to the car track reservations are the strips of parking, each having a width of about 55 feet. This width is divided to provide for a lawn of thirty feet, with two rows of trees, bordered by walks 12 feet wide. Between the two strips of parking is a boulevard 50 feet in width.

Five Tentative Plans.

The trafficways are for business and slow-moving vehicles. The boulevard is intended for fast-moving light vehicles. Along the street car reservations are walks bordering on the strips of lawn. This tentative plan is Sketch A.

Sketch B varies from Sketch A in that it offers a different arrangement of the walks in the parking, so that one walk passes between and underneath the double row of trees. The space allowed between the rows of trees is 20 feet. The park width, including the walk beneath the trees, is 53 feet 6 inches. The trafficways in Sketch B are 45 feet, the same as in Sketch A.

Sketch C proposes to make the walks on the Chestnut and Market street frontages 16 feet wide and narrows the trafficways to 36 feet, placing the street car tracks within the parking in such manner that only the rails show above the grass. This plan would give for the parking, which includes the street car track space and the walk on either side of the double row of trees, a greater width than suggested in the other sketches.

Sketch D also suggests the placing of the car tracks in the parking and covering all but the rails with grass. It allows 16 feet for the Chestnut and Market street walks, and gives the driveways a clear width without street car interference of 36 feet. It provides for two rows of trees in each strip of parking on either side of the boulevard, and for a row of trees between the sidewalks and the trafficways.

Sketch E illustrates the possibilities of a subway underneath the traffic-parkway at minimum cost for construction and with no damage to abutting property. The removal of the car tracks and the substitution of a subway would allow, according to this sketch, a width of 66 feet 6 inches for each strip of parking, including the sidewalks underneath the trees.

World-Famous Thoroughfares.

In creating a traffic-parkway such as that proposed between Market and Chestnut streets, St. Louis will be proceeding along lines of development which have been tested and proved in other cities. The width is not excessive as compared with what other cities have done. The wisdom of separation of fast and slow traffic has been demonstrated and is no longer questioned. The expected great increase of values on either side of the proposed traffic-parkway is based upon the experience of other cities. Paris has, in the world-famous Avenue des Champs Elysees, a thoroughfare 250 feet wide.

Philadelphia has planned the opening of a parkway from the City Hall to the Art Museum on Reservoir Hill and Fairmount Park, to be cut diagonally through existing blocks. This parkway is to be 300 feet wide, and the cost of it is estimated at between $7,000,000 and $8,000,000. Experts have reported that the increase of tax revenue due to the enhanced values of adjacent property will net enough to pay the interest on a bond issue for the full cost of the property condemned and to provide a sinking fund.

Some of the great thoroughfares of the world which have redeemed districts and greatly increased values of adjacent property are as follows:

The Avenue des Champs Elysees, Paris, 250 feet.
Reeperbahn, Hamburg, 210 feet.
Unter den Linden, Berlin, 190 feet.
Ring Strasse, Vienna, 185 feet.
Belle Alliance Strasse, Berlin, 160 feet.
Andrassy, Buda Pesth, 145 feet.
Avenue Henri Martin, Paris, 130 feet.

The Profit in Parkways.

Kansas City affords a nearby illustration of what can be done by a traffic-parkway. The Paseo of that city, a combination of traffic and parkway, redeemed a blighted district. It is now bordered by high-class improvements, which have taken the place of small, cheap structures. The property adjacent to the Paseo has doubled and trebled in value as the result of the improvement.

Commonwealth avenue in Boston affords another illustration of values given to abutting property by two trafficways with parking between.

The plan of Seattle, recently adopted by the Municipal Plan Commission of that city, provides for a central avenue 180 feet wide.

A significant fact bearing upon the central traffic-parkway proposition is the local condition at two points on the two-mile strip. The most valuable properties which it is proposed to condemn lie in front of the City Hall and in front of the Union Station. These two blocks in front of the City Hall with improvements are assessed at $601,970; the two blocks in front of Union Station with improvements are assessed at $694,245. The total of the four blocks, $1,296,215, is 31.5 per cent of the assessed valuations of the entire 21 blocks from Twelfth street to Grand avenue. The marked increase in values of the properties in front of the City Hall and in front of the Union Station are due largely to the civic center and to the transportation center. They safely indicate what may be expected for adjacent property in the way of increased values as soon as the central traffic-parkway is a certainty.

Union Station Surroundings.

Every public-spirited citizen of St. Louis has regretted the depressing influence of surroundings upon the stranger stepping out of Union Station. Many park and boulevard suggestions to remedy the situation have been made and urged. The central traffic-parkway will be more effective than any limited park or plaza. From the front of Union Station the stranger will look east or west as far as the vision extends along the double trafficway, the boulevard and the parking. The view will be such as no other American city affords the incoming stranger.

St. Louis has no park between Wash street on the north and the Mill Creek valley on the south. There is not in all this central section a spot out of doors which offers rest. The proposed improvement will give the city a park two miles long, narrow, to be sure, but of sufficient width for trees and grass, walks and seats. From the south and from the north these park facilities will be within easy walking distance of many thousands of those city dwellers to whom the shade and the green mean most.

Down-Town Dwellers.

All of St. Louis cannot live west of Grand avenue. There is a downtown population to-day. There will be a downtown population for generations to come. The people who must make their homes within the central strip and near its northern and southern borders

have rights to fresh air and to the other park benefits. This central parkway will recognize those rights for all time to come.

The opening of wide, tree-bordered thoroughfares and the establishment of large parks west of Grand avenue have made the St. Louis summer not only tolerable but agreeable to a large proportion of the population. The creation of spacious parkways east of Grand avenue will tend to similar conditions in that section and is justly due to the people who live there.

The primary reason for the traffic-parkway is found in the travel facilities which such a thoroughfare will afford the present and coming generations. From several other points of view the proposition is interesting and desirable.

A Section Without Parks.

The population between Lucas avenue on the north and the Mill Creek Valley railroad tracks on the south, Twelfth street on the east and Grand avenue on the west, as shown by the census of 1910, is 40,601.

To this may be added properly the population between Lucas avenue on the south and Cass avenue on the north, Twelfth street on the east and Grand avenue on the west. This resident population, according to the census of 1910, is 60,939.

According to the latest census, therefore, there are 101,540 people of St. Louis living within easy walking distance of the central traffic-parkway. And these 101,540 people are almost entirely without park benefits to-day. They have one park of a single block on Carr street and one of a single block on Glasgow avenue. They have two playgrounds, each of a single block.

Within the district bounded by Lucas avenue on the north, Mill Creek valley on the south, Grand avenue on the west and Twelfth street on the east there are 991 acres, showing at present a resident population of 41 to the acre. In other words, there are in this district 26,218 people to the square mile.

Within the district bounded by Cass avenue on the north, Lucas avenue on the south, Twelfth street on the east and Grand avenue on the west, there are 763.81 acres, showing at present a resident population of 79.7 to the acre. In this district there are 59,462 people to the square mile.

Density of Population.

The average population of St. Louis to the acre is 17.49, or 11,193 to the square mile.

The greatest density of population in St. Louis, as shown by the census of 1910, is in the immediate vicinity of O'Fallon and High streets, where the average is 162 to the acre. The next greatest density of population is in the vicinity of Biddle and Eighteenth streets, where the average is 148 to the acre. The third greatest density is in the vicinity of Thirteenth and Carr streets, where the average is 145 to the acre.

Here are the great melting pots of St. Louis. Here live these many thousands of St. Louisans to whom Forest, O'Fallon and Carondelet parks are almost unknown countries. Car fare is a financial problem with many. Park privileges must be within walking distance for them. To these considerable elements in the population the parkway offers that rest and recreation to which their citizenship entitles them.

The Night Problem.

In the central traffic-parkway the night problem of downtown St. Louis will find a solution. The boulevard, 50 feet wide, two miles long, cleared for swift traffic, bordered by trees and grass, provided with seats, amply lighted after dark, will become the most frequented and most popular thoroughfare in all St. Louis. Into it at Grand avenue will tie Lindell, West Pine and Forest Park boulevards. In and out of it at the Twelfth street end will flow night traffic such as the business district now knows only on one night of the year, that of the Veiled Prophet.

In Twelfth street to-day St. Louis has a fire guard of inestimable value. No conflagration driven east or west could cross that plaza. In the central traffic-parkway St. Louis would possess a like fire guard against flames driven by a north or a south wind. The large cities face continually the possibilities of spreading flames. They have endeavored to lessen this danger by resort to prevention in construction materials. Of more recent years, with the warning experiences of Chicago, Boston, Baltimore and San Francisco, the argument in favor of plazas or parkways dividing business districts into sections has become one of the strong incentives to the opening of these spaces. The central traffic-parkway would give a fire guard of two miles, impassable for any conflagration starting in the Mill Creek valley and driven northward, or for any spread of flames originating between Twelfth street and Grand avenue and moving southward before a north wind.

Evolution of a City Plan.

St. Louis fully recognizes the importance of planning for the future. The ordinance creating the City Plan Commission and defining its duties is evidence of it. The Commission is an evolution. For several years the Civic League and the various improvement associations of St. Louis have been devoting voluntary effort toward city planning. The Board of Public Improvements and the Municipal Assembly have taken important steps along the best approved lines in the direction of modern city planning. Public-spirited citizens formed what was called the City Plan Association. The members of that organization paid from their own pockets the expense of much investigation and of preparation of suggestions for a better St. Louis. They held many meetings and presented through an executive committee a valuable report upon the subject of city planning for St. Louis. The movement gained such strength through the volunteer work of citizen organizations and through practical steps taken by the Board of Public Improvements and the Municipal Assembly that the City Plan Commission was created by ordinance. The members of the Commission give their time and thought without compensation.

Growth of the City.

Half a century ago only three per cent of the population of the United States dwelt in cities. Now, as shown by the census of 1910, thirty-three of every hundred Americans live in cities of 8,000 and upwards. Including those communities below 8,000, the urban life of the United States is between forty-four and forty-five per cent of the entire population. In other words, 40,000,000 people now live in American cities and towns. More than 200 of these communities have taken up city and town planning to better the living conditions. These facts show the character of the problem and the magnitude of the movement.

Within the month just passed the fourth session of the National City Planning Conference was held in Boston. The conference was a body of mayors and other municipal officers, architects, landscape architects, city engineers and city plan commissioners from the principal cities of the United States and Canada. The keynote of utility was sounded early and often in the session. Arnold W. Brunner of New York defined the city planning movement in these words:

"The first impression we must overcome is that the city is to be

turned over to a number of artists who intend in some vague way to make it beautiful. City planning means the rational treatment of a city to promote the convenience and health of its citizens. A city plan will not be ruinously expensive and plunge the city into debt. It simply means the exercise of such prudence and forethought as are necessary to get the success of any business enterprise."

Utility, Comfort, Economy.

Frederick Law Olmstead, the chairman of the Executive Committee of the Conference, said at the beginning of the sessions city planning is "the intelligent control and guidance of the entire physical growth and alterations of cities; embracing all of the problems of relieving and avoiding congestion—congestion of people in buildings and of buildings upon land, congestion of transportation facilities, congestion in respect to the means of supplying light, air, water, or anything else essential to the health and happiness of the people, but also embracing in addition to the problems of congestion, each one of the myriad problems involved in making our cities year by year, in their physical arrangement and equipment, healthier, pleasanter and more economical instruments for the use of the people who dwell within them in carrying on the part of the work and life of the world which is not to be done in the open country."

Experts on St. Louis Problem.

In this spirit the conference worked through the three days' session. One session was devoted to "the problem of blighted" districts, which J. Randolph Coolidge, Jr., described as "districts in which land values after a period of increase are stationary or falling." The conditions of two blighted districts of St. Louis and the treatment of them proposed by the City Plan Commission were laid before members of the conference for criticism. The suggested combination of traffic and parkways from Twelfth street westward to Grand avenue was explained. As to the ming influence of this plan upon the whole district now sufferin was no difference of opinion among the city planners. Other cities have met conditions similar to those which exist between Twelfth street and Grand avenue and have found that a great thoroughfare similar to that in contemplation by the City Plan Commission of St. Louis has quickened values in the district to a surprising degree. The payment of benefits by installments distributed through a series of years was strongly

UNION STATION, FRONTING CENTRAL TRAFFIC-PARKWAY

BLOCK FRONTING UNION STATION AND TRAFFIC-PARKWAY

recommended by the city planners in their consideration of the practicability of the St. Louis traffic-parkway.

Other Cities Moving.

Boston, New York and Philadelphia are opening new and widening old streets in the congested or blighted districts at the cost of many millions of dollars to remedy their local conditions similar to those which affect the St. Louis district between Twelfth street and Grand avenue. It was stated that Boston's plans for new or wider streets, including what has been spent recently, will cost over $30,000,000. For a third of a century Boston has had under consideration a thoroughfare directly connecting the two great terminals. But during this time property values have been increasing, and now such a main trafficway will cost enormously. The regret of the Boston authorities is that the thoroughfare was not put through between the terminals when the necessity for it was first felt.

Mr. Coolidge is a member of the Metropolitan Plan Commission created by the Massachusetts Legislature. In an address before the conference upon this subject of blighted districts, he said:

Conservating Values.

"City planning has new functions more important than the conservation and restoration of impaired land values. All that public authority can lawfully do to make life more agreeable in such districts should be done rather than in those that pay a larger share of the taxes or have an increasing population. No city is well administered unless the whole of it is well administered. Where private capital halts and dreads the risk, and feels no responsibility for future conditions, public credit must be applied, and declining values, social and economic, must be supported until they can stand alone, for the city, unlike a business enterprise, cannot liquidate, it cannot discard its unprofitable lines. It must grow, it must change, but it must not depreciate."

Improvement in the approaches to and in the thoroughfares through blighted districts comes first in the remedies suggested by the experts in city planning. By the widening of streets, by the planting of trees, by the creation of open spaces and squares, by playgrounds and small parks, other cities are redeeming their blighted districts.

Counting the Cost.

One of the most important sessions of the City Planning Conference was that devoted to the problem of "paying the bills for city improvements." Nelson P. Lewis, chief engineer of the Board of Estimates and Apportionment of New York City, opened the session with a strong argument, in the course of which he said:

"One principle should be invariably recognized; namely, where there is local benefit there should be local assessment." He said that a change in the laws of New York which enlarged the power of local assessment on property most benefited had worked advantageously. In the widening of residential streets the experience of New York taught that the cost should be assessed against abutting property. But in the case of thoroughfares of greater use, the assessment district should be extended beyond abutting property.

Mr. Lewis enlarged on the benefits which immediately follow city improvements by showing "that property jumped in value in seven years beyond the normal increase in Manhattan and the Bronx, as a result of the first subway, $85,000,000. The cost of the subway passing through that portion affected was $13,000,000, and the cost of the entire subway was $43,000,000, so that if the property owners affected had paid for the entire subway they would have cleared $37,500,000, even allowing for an interest charge of six per cent until their profits were realized."

The Assessment Principle.

Concluding his address, Engineer Lewis said: "A desire for something which involves no direct cost is not a sign of intelligent interest. We are learning that the improvement of our cities pays. That is a hopeful sign. If we have simply reached the stage where we want better conditions only if some one else is to pay the bills, the hope has not a very substantial basis. If we want them badly enough to pay for them ourselves in proportion to the benefit we feel sure will follow, we are making real progress."

Street Commissioner Gallivan of Boston gave the conference several illustrations, notably that of the widening of Avery street, which had greatly increased values in Boston. He stated that this Avery street improvement had been followed by the creation of a new retail center and that the increase in values of taxable property would in a short time cover every expenditure which the city had made for the improvements. Answering the question, "Who shall pay the cost

of city planning?'' Commissioner Gallivan said: ''I see no good reason why the millions spent by American municipalities for public improvements should not be returned in generous proportion by land owners who reap such tremendous resultant profits.''

City Planning Conclusions.

At the close of the last session the National Conference adopted the following as the city planning conclusions reached in the experience of those composing the body:

''Where there is local benefit there should always be local assessment on the land benefited.

''The entire city, or the metropolitan district, should bear no part of the expense unless the improvement is in some degree of metropolitan importance and benefit.

''Assessments should not be confined to the cost of acquiring and improving streets, but should extend to any improvement which will increase the value of the neighboring property, and should be apportioned as nearly as possible according to the probable benefit.

''A workable policy once adopted should be consistently adhered to.''

Of the sixteen largest cities in the United States St. Louis to-day ranks fourth in population and twelfth in indebtedness in proportion to population. The 687,029 St. Louisans are carrying a debt of only $35.49 per capita. Only four of these sixteen largest cities have a smaller debt in proportion to population than St. Louis. This remarkable showing is due in the main to the wisdom of former generations of St. Louisans in the matter of expenditure for parks.

St. Louis' Distinction.

An analysis of the municipal debts of the other large cities of the country shows that their obligations were incurred largely for the acquisition of park property. In the case of St. Louis, land for parks was obtained in advance of the growth of the city at prices which now seem insignificant. This city for many years enjoyed the distinction of having the greatest park acreage in proportion to population of any city in the United States. That distinction was obtained by the purchase of land for large parks thirty-five years ago, long before the city had grown to actually need these parks. The price per acre paid for Forest Park was only $620.

The same argument which prompted the people of St. Louis thirty-five years ago to acquire Forest, O'Fallon and Carondelet parks applies now to the proposed traffic-parkway. The property to be condemned can be acquired to-day at very low prices when immediate and future benefits are taken into consideration. These prices average much lower to-day than they have for many years. They prompt speedy action if there is merit in the plan to redeem this central section of the city from its present degradation and to insure for the future the character to which its location entitles it.

A Wise Generation.

The foresight of those who planned and legislated in 1870-80 for the future St. Louis gave the city not only Forest, O'Fallon and Carondelet parks, but widened to one hundred feet the narrow country roads now known as Kingshighway, Union and Delmar boulevards. The ground for this additional width was taken at acre prices from farms. If the petitions and arguments of real estate men had been accepted in 1850-60 by the authorities, Grand avenue, as laid out then, would be to-day 150 feet wide instead of the eighty feet, already suffering from congestion in the vicinity of Olive street.

The ordinance creating this body further directs the City Plan Commission "to suggest the State and municipal legislation necessary to carry out the recommendations of the Commission."

In conformance with this provision the City Plan Commission has held conferences with the Board of Public Improvements and with the Law Department of the City of St. Louis. The Law and Legislation Committee of the Commission is conducting a thorough investigation of such sections of the charters of other cities as relate to improvements of the character contemplated for St. Louis. Legislative enactments conferring elsewhere municipal powers which St. Louis does not possess are being examined as to their practical operation. These inquiries are being made thoroughly and are progressing satisfactorily.

Legislation Needed.

The members of the Commission are unanimously of the opinion that the city planning movement upon which St. Louis has entered may be greatly expedited and made far less burdensome by action of the Missouri Legislature at the coming session and by amendments to the city charter at the municipal election of April, 1913. The prepara-

tion of the provisions to be presented to the Legislature and of charter amendments to be submitted to the voters has been undertaken. The definite suggestions of the Commission as to the needed additions to the municipal powers will be laid before the Municipal Assembly.

The Commission is strongly impressed with the conviction that the city authority in the matter of acquisition of property for park and boulevard purposes should be strengthened and should be more clearly expressed. The Commission believes that in such acquisition the power should be conferred on the Municipal Assembly to give the property owner upon whom benefits are assessed the privilege of meeting such assessments in installments, distributed through such series of years for each case as the Assembly in its judgment may deem just.

The Commission urges such legislation as shall divide the cost of the proposed improvements between the adjacent property owners and the whole city on an equitable basis.

In entering upon the practical details of this extensive movement for betterment of St. Louis the Commission realizes that the municipal government will proceed more expeditiously and with greater satisfaction to property owners and the people generally if the legal basis is made sure and the interests of all are recognized and protected in the legislation suggested.

Respectfully,

C. P. WALBRIDGE, *Chairman.*
J. H. GUNDLACH,
J. H. SOMMERICH,
MAXIME REBER,
JAMES C. TRAVILLA,
DWIGHT M. DAVIS,
GEORGE E. KESSLER,
HUGO A. KOEHLER,
PHILIP C. SCANLAN,
COLIN M. SELPH,
CHAS. A. STIX,
HARRY B. WALLACE,
THOMAS C. YOUNG.

WALTER B. STEVENS,
Secretary.

July 9, 1912.

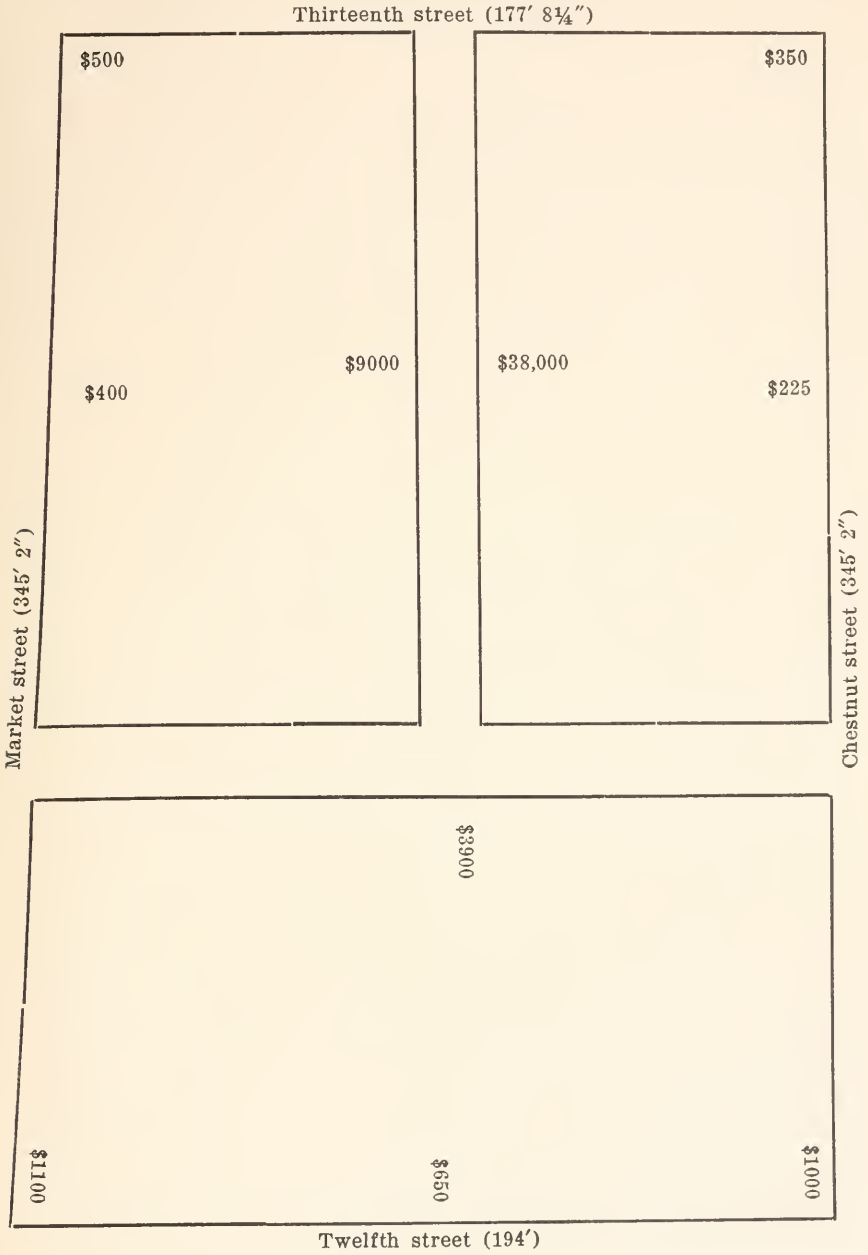
MUNICIPAL COURTS, FOURTEENTH AND MARKET STREETS

MARKET STREET, FRONTING MUNICIPAL COURTS

PLATS OF BLOCKS RECOMMENDED FOR CONDEMNATION.

The amounts on corners indicate the assessor's valuations (for taxes of 1912) per front foot of ground for lots of 25 feet frontage. The amounts in middle of blocks indicate the assessor's valuations per front foot of ground for remainder of frontage.

Amounts in center of blocks indicate the assessor's total valuations of improvements on that portion of each block within street and alley lines shown.



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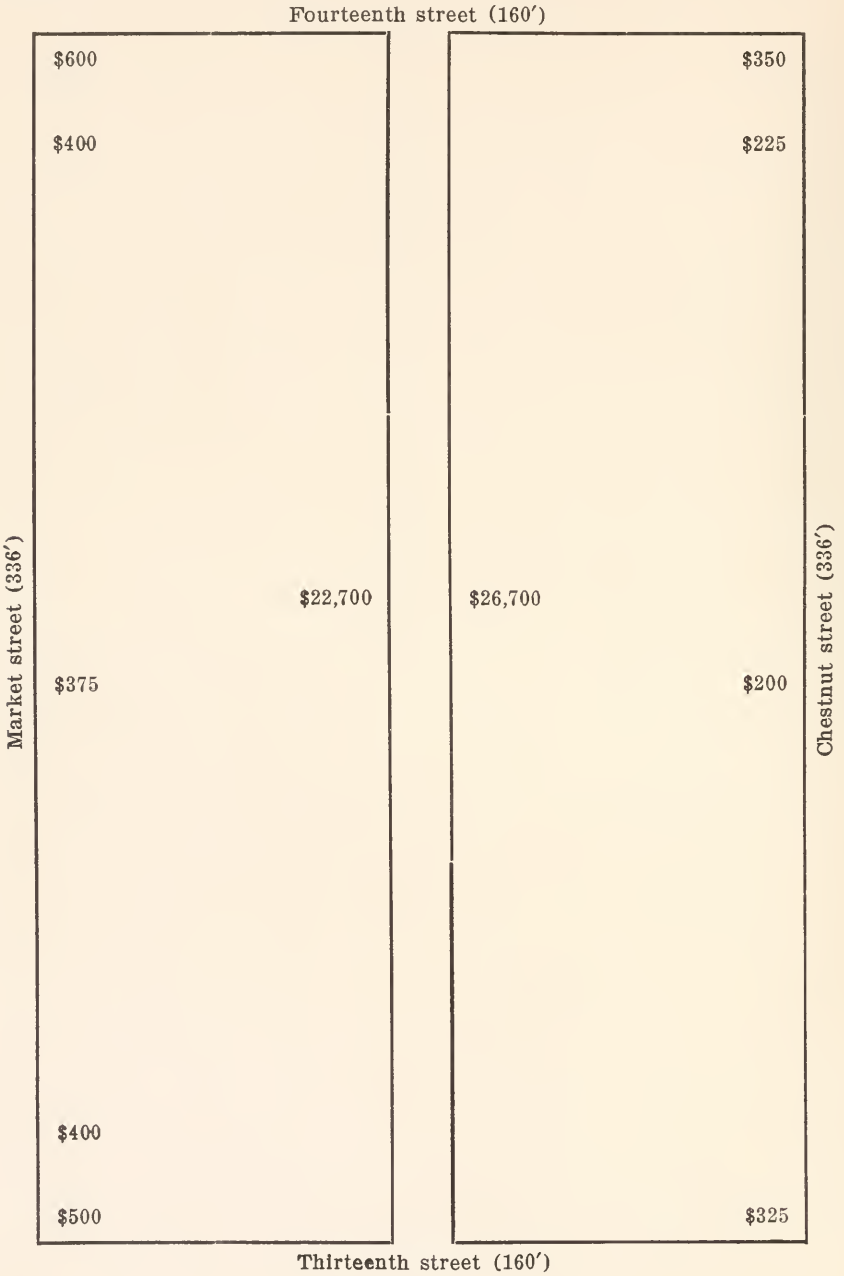

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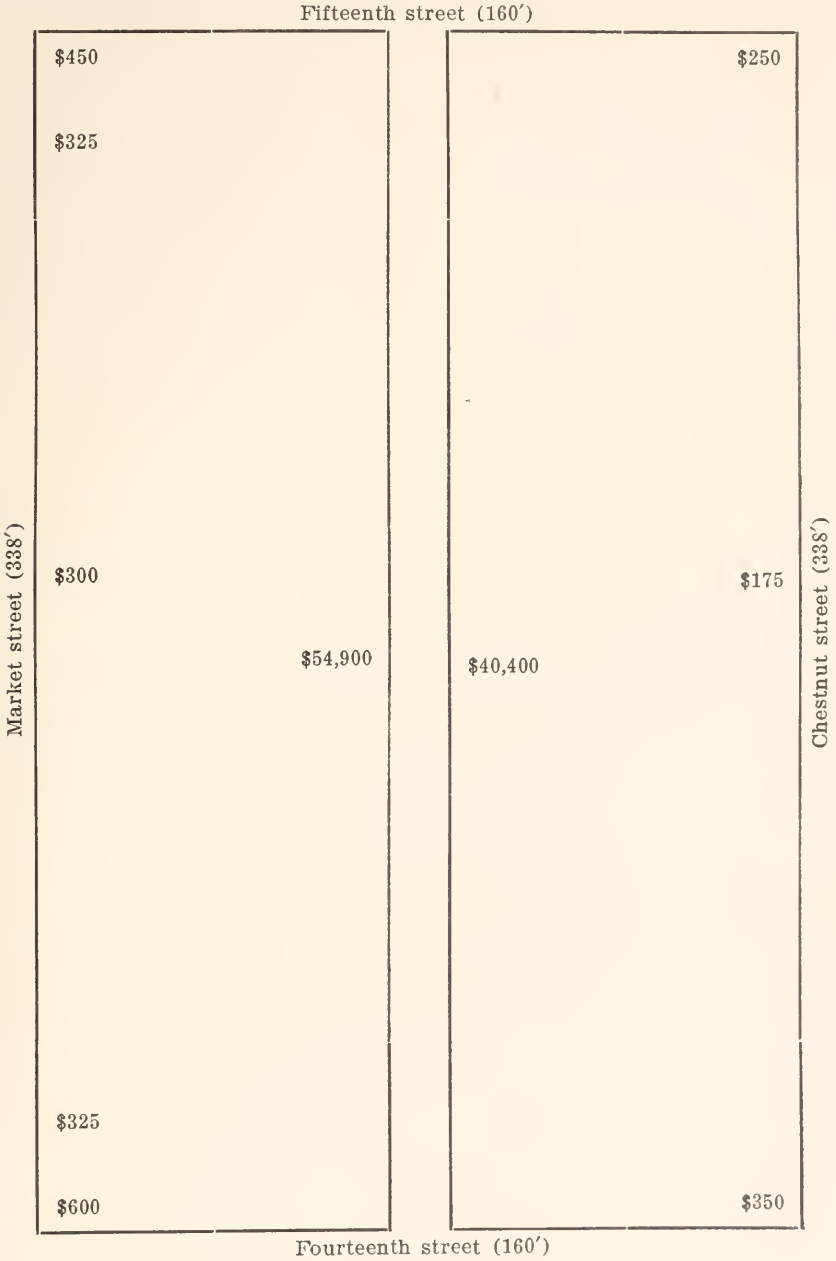

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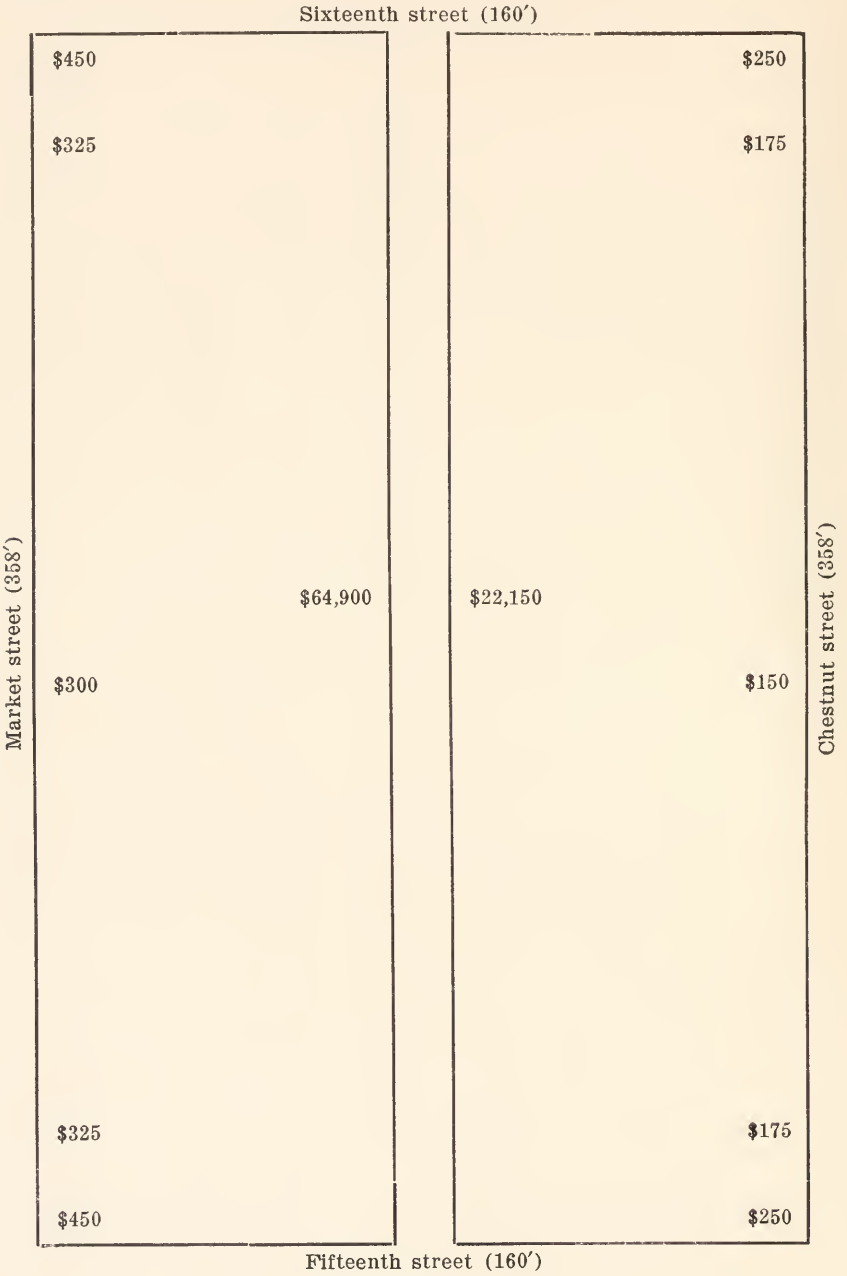

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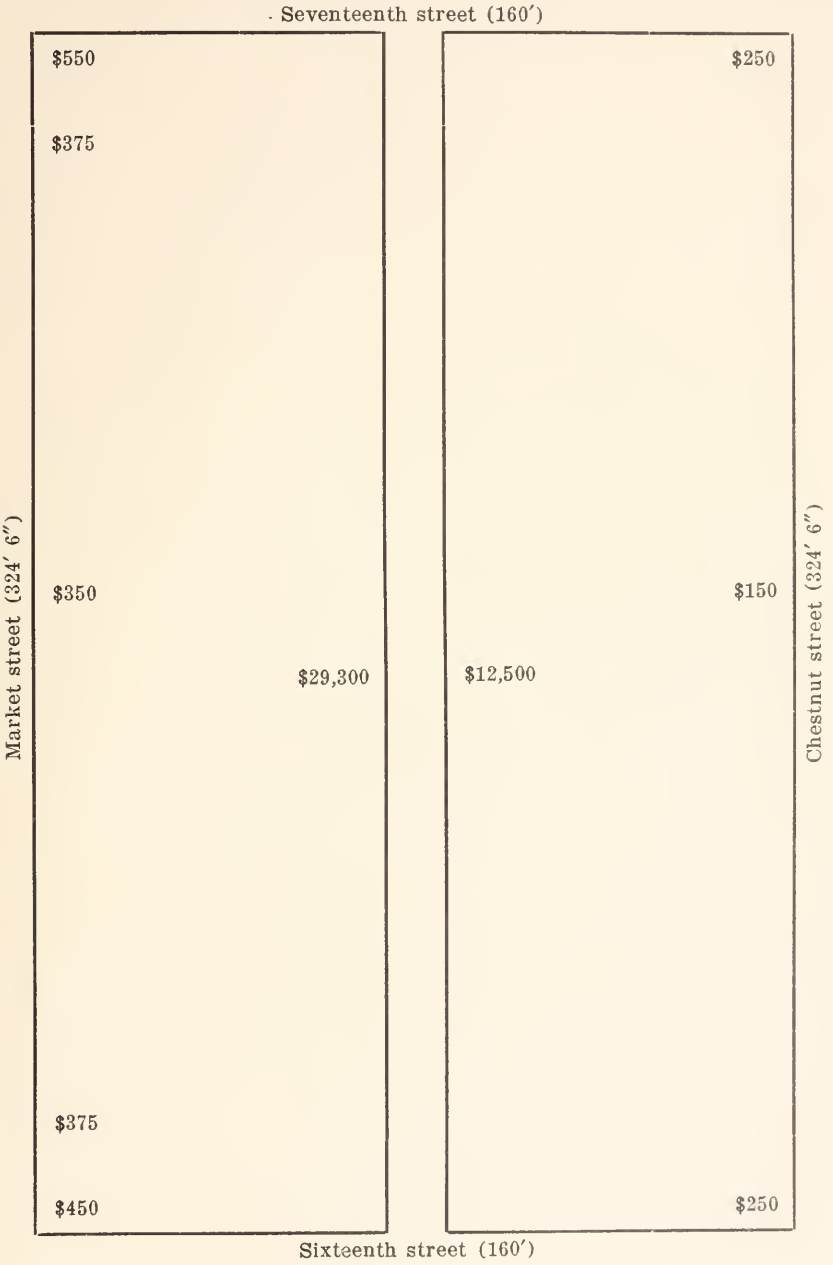

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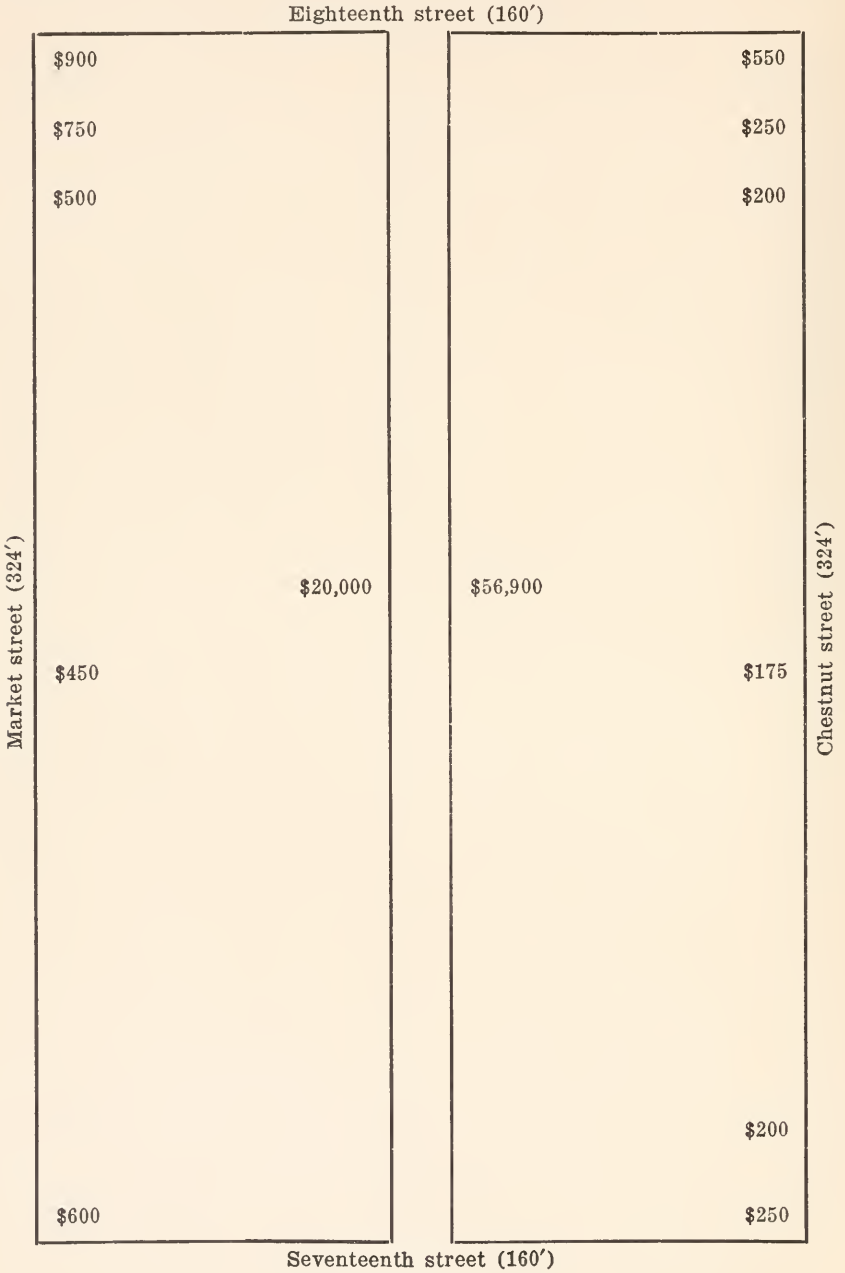

CITY HALL, TWELFTH AND MARKET STREETS

TWELFTH STREET, TERMINUS OF TRAFFIC-PARKWAY

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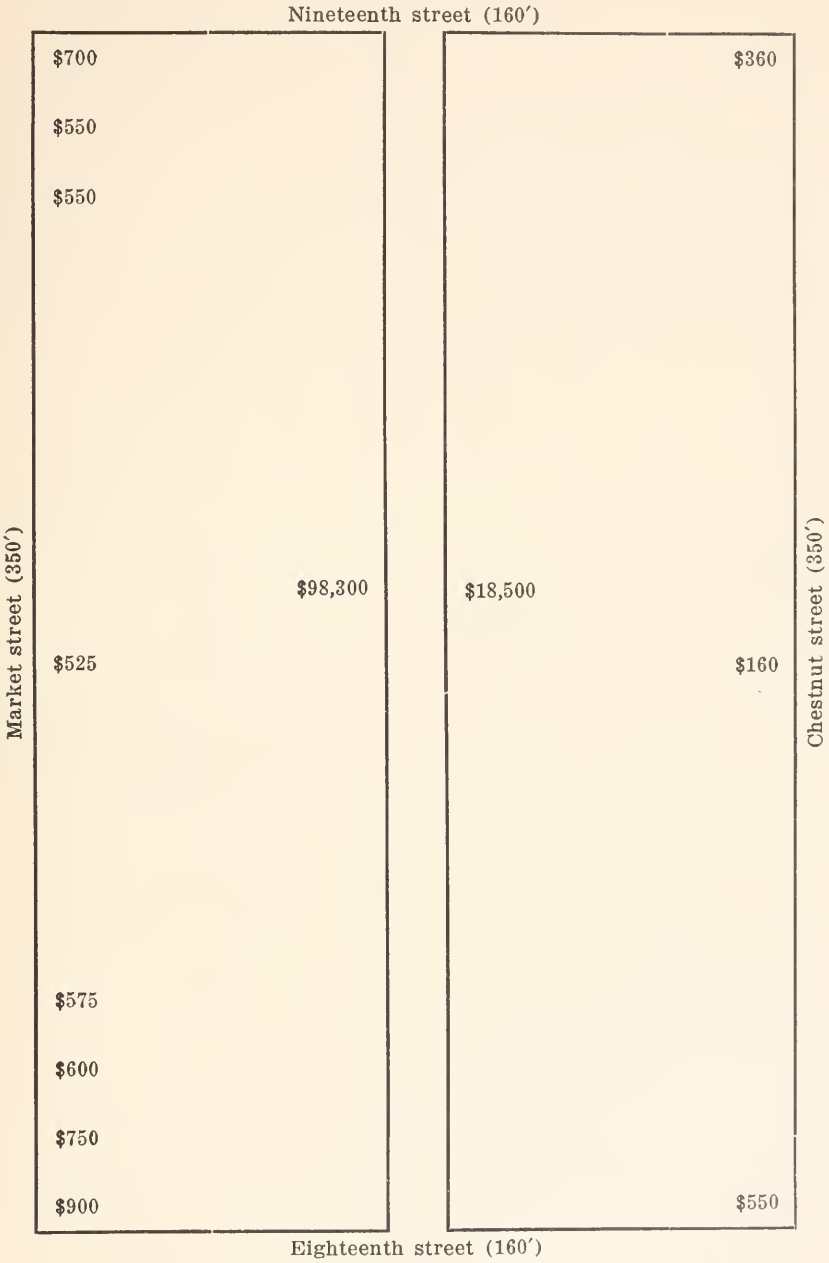

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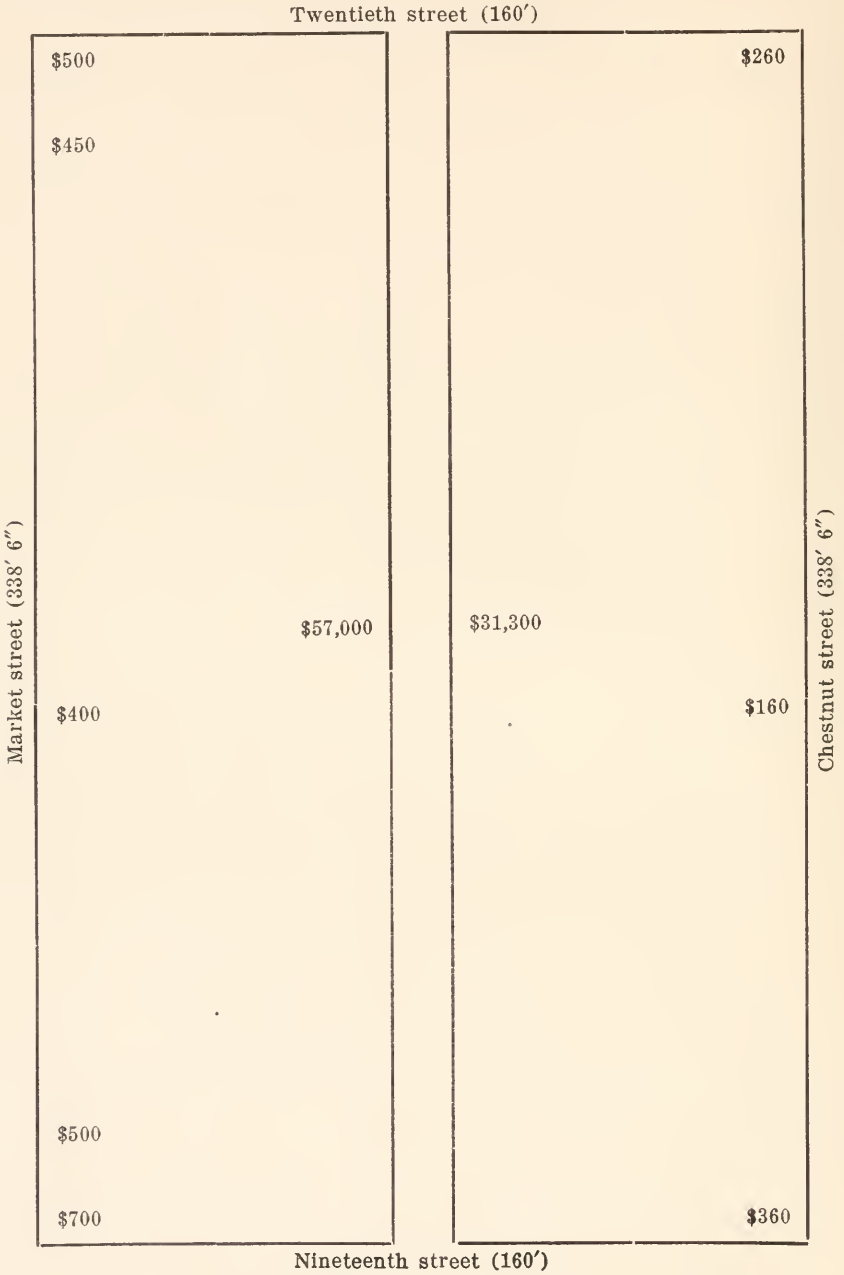

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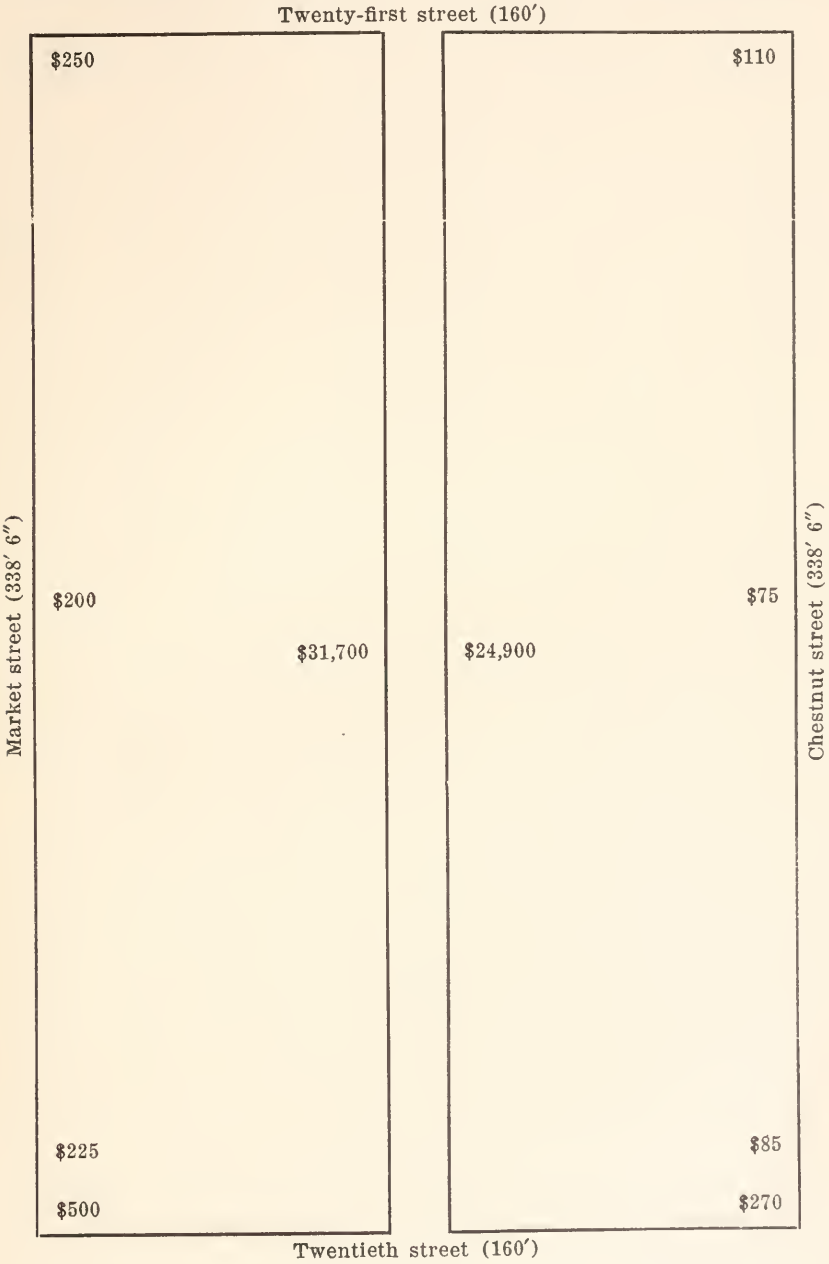

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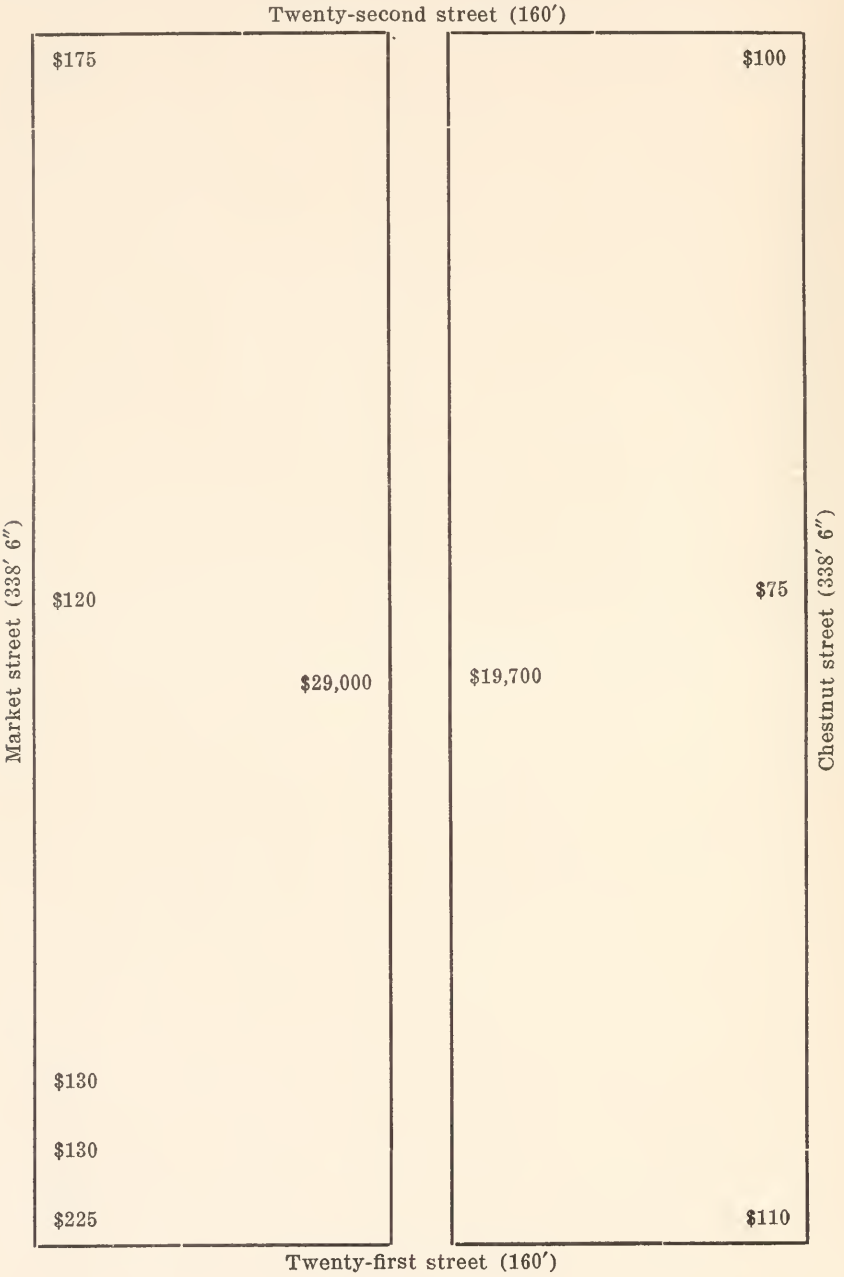

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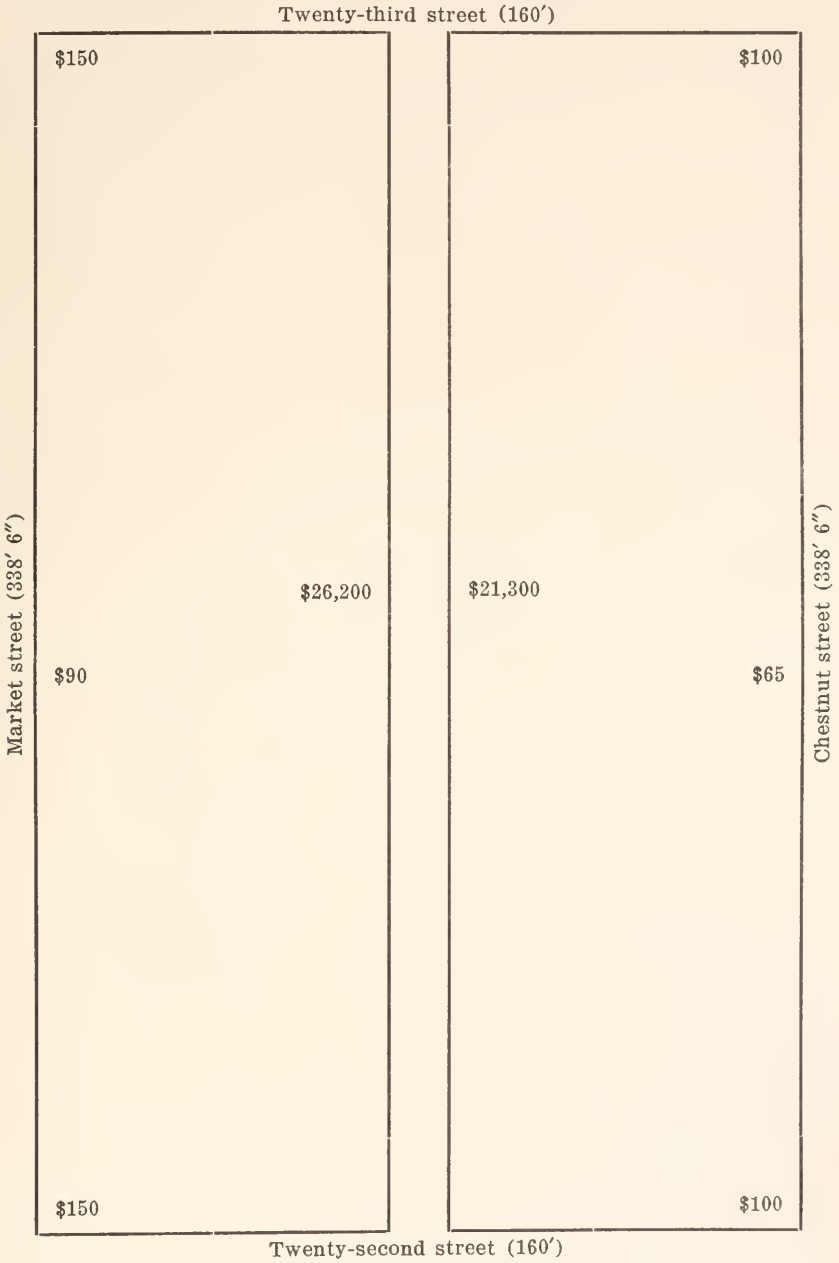

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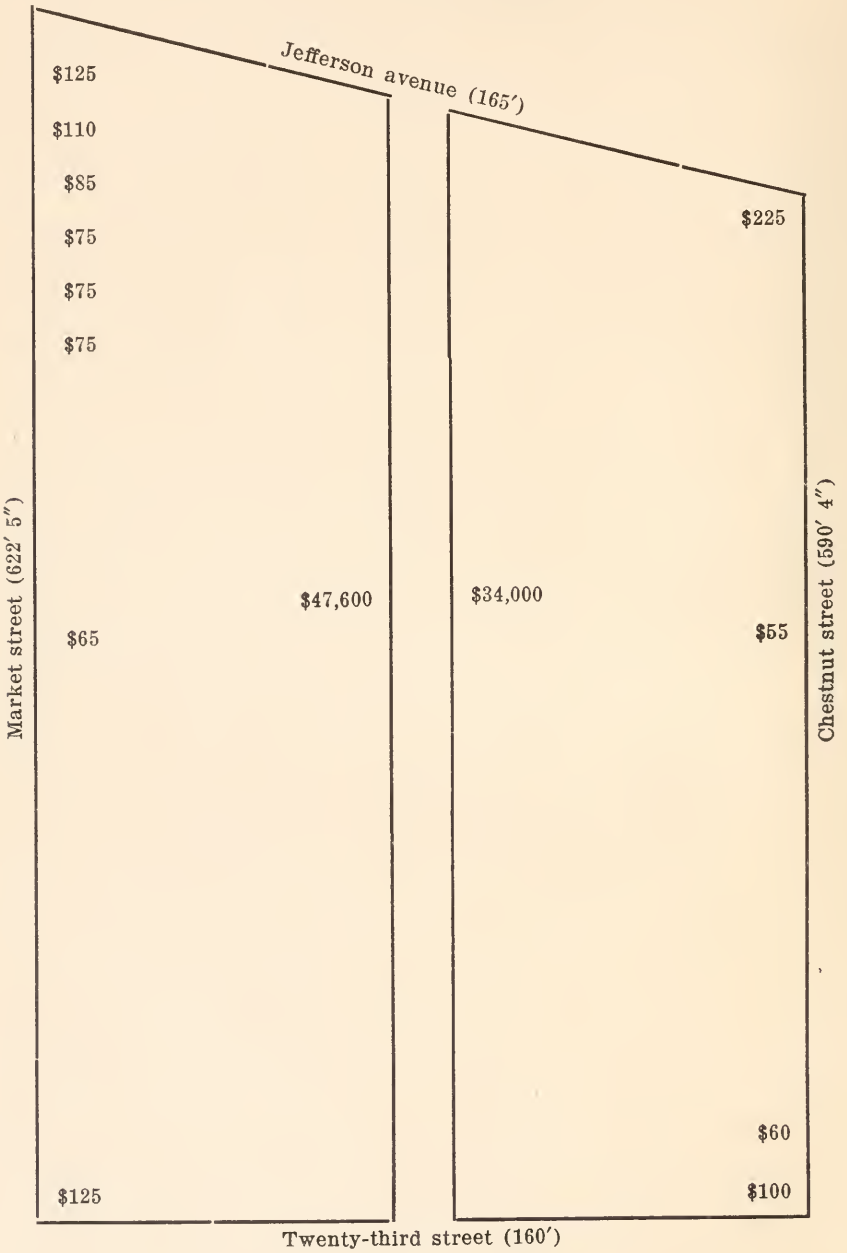

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